



Waterbury Regional Chamber
driving business to business

STATEMENT OF LYNN G. WARD, PRESIDENT & CEO of the WATERBURY REGIONAL CHAMBER before the LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE on H.B. 5291 (RAISED) AN ACT INCREASING THE MINIMUM WAGE, REMOVING THE MINIMUM WAGE TIP CREDIT, AND INCREASING PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO PAY THE MINIMUM WAGE.

February 28, 2012

Senator Prague, Representative Zalaski and members of the Labor and Public employees Committee, I regret that I am unable to join you for this morning's Public Hearing and thank you for receiving my statement as part of public input for this proposed legislation. The Waterbury Regional Chamber, which serves 13 towns in the Greater Waterbury region and represents the collective interests of nearly 1,000 members in matters of public policy and economic development, strongly opposes House Bill 5291.

An ongoing economic downturn that is the worst since the Great Depression is clearly not the time to enact legislation that further hinders business growth. Doing so would send the wrong message to both businesses and prospective hires. Enacting this legislation would convey to businesses that were hurt by the largest tax increase in Connecticut history in 2011 that state policy will directly continue increasing the cost of doing business with every given year.

It would negatively impact prospective hires, particularly seasonal positions for teenage workers. These positions provide our youth important opportunities to develop a good work ethic and gain initial, positive experiences in the workforce. The number of these opportunities would be significantly curtailed as a result of this legislation. Employers facing increased labor costs also traditionally hire workers with the most experience and highest skill levels. Therefore, a decrease in entry level positions not only limits the ability of teenage workers to find current job openings, it also sets them up for increased difficulties later in their careers.

Finally, Waterbury has the dubious distinction as the labor market with the state's highest unemployment rate for more than a decade. Passage of this legislation would create yet another obstacle to our region's efforts to move itself out of this ranking.

Sincerely,

Lynn G. Ward
President and CEO, Waterbury Regional Chamber